

"Songs In The Night: Song Of A Star!"

2:10

Text: Matthew ~~2:11, ~~When opening their treasures~~~~

"When they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

The wise men who were following the star came upon a young shepherd boy. This lad was left behind by the other shepherds who had gone to pay homage to Jesus. His duty was to tend the fires while they were gone. The boy saw the treasures these men were taking to Jesus, and he was very sad. He could not go to Bethlehem because he had no gift and besides he had to take care of the fires. Suddenly, he had an idea. He dashed from fire to fire piling up the wood so the fires would maintain themselves for sometime. Then he ran down the hill toward the town of Bethlehem. Outside of the stable he stopped, he still had no present to bring. But then he remembered that on the way down the hill he had noticed a pretty little flower growing by itself. So he ran up the hill, plucked the flower and again came to the stable. He entered very quietly and watched in fascination while the kings gave their magnificent gifts, and he wished he had something a little more elegant to give. Mary, the mother looked in his direction and motioned for him to come closer saying, "We have been waiting for you, come bring your precious gift." He very timidly approached the manger and very gently placed the flower in the baby's hand. The baby smiled and raised the flower to his lips and kissed it. When he put the flower down, the center of the flower had turned a beautiful gold, where his lips had touched it. And that is how the flower we call the Daisy got its yellow center.

Another little boy named Juan who lived in the Mexican village of Cardenas, was very sad one Christmas Eve, because he had nothing to bring to the church that night. It was the custom that each one would bring their gift to the church so the three wise men could carry the gifts to the babe of Bethlehem. On this Christmas Eve he found himself standing outside the little church listening to the beautiful music and wishing he had a gift to bring. He stood on tiptoe and peeked in the windows to see all the beautiful gifts that had been placed on the altar. Surely the Holy child will be pleased this

birthday he thought. He stomped his little feet clad in shoes worn through in the snow to keep warm, and clasped his thin sweater around him. Sadly he knelt in the snow to pray. Though he tried very hard not to cry, the tears trickled out of his tightly closed eyelids, and rolled down his cheek on onto the snow. Suddenly the music seemed to grow louder, and he felt a great warmth as though the summer sun were shining. He opened his eyes and as he looked at the ground he saw a beautiful flower growing where he was kneeling. Very excitedly he touched it, and thought at last he had a gift for the Christ Child. With great reverence ~~xx~~ because he knew it was a miracle, he plucked it and took it into the church and laid it on the altar. The flower had beautiful scarlet petals and a yellow center, and ever afterward the Mexicans called it the flower of the Holy Night. In our country we call it the Poinsettia.

Now these two little stories of flowers and the Christ Child are merely legends, but they show one thing, and that is the giving of gifts of love. Gifts that were given from the heart, and thereby gifts that are priceless. Most of us from childhood on, have looked forward to Christmas Day. We looked forward to it because it was a day in which we got things. We didn't think of much else, but what we were going to receive. Perhaps we still look forward with anticipation to Christmas morning. We can readily understand this in children because to them it is a tremendous amount of fun, and so it should be. But we must learn, and teach our children as well, that it is a time of giving as well as getting. It is a time of sharing instead of a time of taking. This is the real purpose of Advent, to prepare us for Christmas. For the birth that is to take place and to recognize it as the gift from God. To know for a certainty that God stepped into the affairs of men, and He chose to do so in a way that we could understand, and that was in the form of a human in a baby at that. Almost everyone loves babies.

But many times we reach this stage of the Christmas season and we hear people moaning and complaining that Christmas is too commercial. And many times they are right. When we were in Connecticut we went into a K-Mart or some other

large store and they were putting away the summer things and replacing them with winter items, among which were Christmas decorations. Salespeople and sales-clerks everywhere, begin to rub their aching feet around about now, and ~~more~~ more than one of them is heard to exclaim, "I'll be glad when Christmas is over." Everything is hustle and bustle, hurry and get done. Run, and take care of this, rush and do that. Push and shove, and bake and cook and clean and scrub. In all of this we lose the real meaning of what it is all about.

There are two seasons in the year that are really special to me. One is Easter and the other is Christmas. Each one fills my heart to overflowing. Not because ~~of~~ they are holidays of festivity and fun, but because of the significance it has for me personally. I recognize and realize that each of them is a day observed in which God did something for me. Me, as miserable as I am, God thought enough of me to show His love toward me. Is it any wonder we lose sight of what Christmas is all about when ^{and Easter} Jesus Christ takes second place to Santa Claus, and the Easter Bunny precedes the risen Saviour. Santa Claus is fine, and so is the Easter Bunny, but we should teach our children that all of the giving and getting is done because God gave to us. We need not only teach it to our children, but to ourselves as well, so that it becomes written on our hearts and we really know what it is all about.

People tell us to "Put Christ Back In Christmas," but how can we if all who are supposed to act like Christians join all of those who merely see Christmas as another day to get drunk, or to have a wild immoral party at their place of employment? The only way we will ever get Christ back in Christmas is to be Christians in all of our actions, and in all of our lives, and not just on Sunday.

The scripture we read for this morning told once again of the visit from the Wise Men to pay their respects to Jesus Christ the babe of Bethlehem, and it is a wonderful story of gifts and giving. But the thing that is so often overlooked, is found in the 10th verse of this portion of scripture.

We read: "When they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."

They were overcome with joy, for they knew they had reached the destination toward which they had traveled. That star had beckoned and shone for them, and had led them to where the actual source of that light was born. They ~~There is a light that comes from the East~~ came searching and found what they were searching for. Many others have searched and are still searching and are not aware of what it is they seek.

(Illustration 15 year old boy & poem written before suicide)

"The sky is blue and way too high
I wish I could get beyond the sky
There's things up there better than dope,
Is there a chance, is there some hope?
Stoned crazy I'm out of my mind
I know there's something I can't find
A home and love is that what I've lost?
I've got to get there whatever the cost.
Is there a ticket I need to buy
To get off this earth and into the sky?
I hear there's a god in that ocean of blue
And he's calling and crying for me and you.
Is there a ticket I need to buy to get off this earth and into the sky?

This poem was clipped from the Tampa Tribune recently. It was written by a 15 year old boy and was found on his dead body after he had hung himself from an oak tree 40 feet from his home. You can almost hear the screams of the young man as he was searching for something more in life than he found. He wondered if you could buy your way to eternal life. If he had only known it was free. Pat Kelley was 15 years old, and that's all he'll ever be."

Another young man who was 34 years old when he died of cancer in 1954 was a jazz musician. His name was Alfred S. Burt and each Christmas he would compose a Christmas Carol and he would send these to his parents as his Christmas Card from himself. Each year his carols are becoming more popular, but the one which he wrote, that I believe really speaks to us is entitled "The Star Carol."

"Long years ago on a deep winters night, high in the heavens a star
shone bright.
While in a manger a wee baby lay, sweetly asleep on a bed of hay.
Jesus our Lord was that baby so small, laid down to sleep in a
humble stall.
Then came the star and it stood overhead, shedding its light round
His little head.
Dear baby Jesus how tiny thou art, I'll make a place for Thee in
my heart.
And when the stars in the heavens I see, Ever and always, I'll
think of Thee.

Men came from the East seeking a king by following a star. ~~Another~~ A
young man looked at the heavens and saw Jesus in the very stars themselves.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA
THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT DECEMBER 15, 1974
REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. MARILYN STEPHENSON, ORGANIST
MRS. CYNDIE SYBERT, YOUTH CHOIR DIRECTOR
JODIE MARTE, PATTY BASEHORE - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.

PRELUDE MUSIC: "HOW BRIGHTLY SHINES THE MORNING STAR" BACH
"QUIET SONGS OF THE HOLY NIGHT" SMITH

SILENT PRAYER

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 102 "HARK, THE HERALD ANGELS SING"
*ASCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN

*EXHORTATION

*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "O CHRIST WHO HAS CALLED US IN
LOVE TO BE ONE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH GOD, FORGIVE
US WHEN WE HAVE NOT BEEN TRUE TO YOUR CALL; WHEN OUR
FAMILIES HAVE NOT BEEN ONE IN CHRIST DIRECTING US TO
CHRISTIAN GROWTH THROUGH A CHURCH UNITED IN YOUR NAME;
WHEN WE HAVE NOT ATTEMPTED TO LEARN YOUR WILL FOR US;
WHEN WE HAVE FAILED TO UNDERSTAND OUR COMMUNITY AND ITS
NEEDS FOR HEALTHY GROWTH. BE MERCIFUL AND UNDERSTANDING,
GRANTING US FORGIVENESS AND THE WILL AND DESIRE TO GROW
IN CHRISTIAN UNITY. AMEN."

*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN

*PRAISE

*PASTOR: 10 LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.

*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE

*DOXOLOGY No. 551

SCRIPTURE LESSON: MATTHEW 2: 1-12

LIGHTING OF ADVENT CANDLES

HYMN No. 106 "WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS BY
NIGHT"

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES' CREED)

*GLORIA PATRI

*CALL TO PRAYER

*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.

*PASTOR: LET US PRAY.

PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM: "THE BLESSED BIRD" BRISTOL
ANTHEM: "GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN" (YOUTH CHOIR)
(SPIRITUAL)

SERMON: "SONGS IN THE NIGHT: SONG OF A STAR!"

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 105 "ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD"

*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE: "THREE KINGS" HOPKINS

----- *CONGREGATION STANDING -----

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY
MR. & MRS. JAMES STEWART FOR MRS. ESTHER YOUNG (MOTHER)
SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: *PAUL RIEMER, DARYL
TAIT, JOHN DREHER, GARY PENAR AND DON KINGSLEY.
DEACON AND MRS. ROBERT KNAUER WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL
AT THE DOOR TODAY.

NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY: MRS. MARGARET
COVERT AND

HOSPITALIZED: MRS. O.H. (DOROTHY) NICHOLAS - ICU,
MR. JAMES STEWART - PRES. UNIV. HOSPITAL. MR. BERT
KNAUER - BCMH. *MRS. BEATRICE HILFRED*

TONIGHT - 7:00 - CHURCH FAMILY CHRISTMAS PROGRAM IN
THE UNDERCROFT - THERE WILL BE FUN AND FELLOWSHIP
FOR ALL - SANTA WILL BE HERE - LADIES DON'T FORGET
TO BRING THE COOKIES.

WED. - 6:00 P.M. - GOLDEN CIRCLE ANNUAL TUREEN DINNER -
HUSBAND OR FRIENDS ARE INVITED.

FRIDAY - 6:30 - THE ARC WILL GO CHRISTMAS CAROLING
FOR SHUT-INS - LEAVING SHARP AT 6:30. AFTER CAROLING
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED AT THE BRIDE MCBRIDE HOME.

NEXT SUNDAY - HOLY COMMUNION - 11:00 A.M.

DON'T FORGET AT 11:00 P.M. - CHRISTMAS EVE - HOLY
COMMUNION AND CANDLELIGHT SERVICE. IF YOU HAVE NEVER
BEEN HERE FOR THIS SERVICE - MAKE IT A MUST THIS YEAR.
MRS. H. L. DUTTER WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THOSE WHO
SENT CARDS, VISITED HER AND REMEMBERED HER IN THEIR
PRAYERS.

OUR BEST WISHES AND CONGRATULATIONS GO OUT TO REV.
AND MRS. RALPH C. LINK WHO ARE CELEBRATING THEIR
23RD WEDDING ANNIVERSARY TODAY.

THE LAST OF THE POINSETTA'S WILL BE ORDERED IN THE MORNING.
JAN. 12, 19, 26; FEB. 2, 16 AND 23 ARE OPEN FOR FLOWERS.

*FURN. NEEDED IN THE 6 KIDS
WELCOME VISITORS*

But so often overlook, found in 10th vs
We read (read text)

They overcome joy
knew had reached destin 2 which travel
that star beckoned/shone 4 them,
led 2 source that lite was born
They came serching & found what serch 4

Many others still serch not aware watt seek
(Illustration 15 yr boy & suicide)

Another young man 34 died cancer 1954 Alfred S Burt
was jazz musician
ea Xmas compose Carol, send parents Xmas card
(Illustration Star Carol) greeting

Men came East seek king/follow star
yg man look heavens saw Js in stars
nother yg man looked heavens saw nothing

These "Songs In The Night"
& partic "Song Of A Star"

This messa. convey world cott up hollow laugh/gait,
of celebrate Boome more HOLIDAY, than HOLY DAY

This messa bind upon ea us,
must share 15yr olds world, who serch 4 life answer
This messa, must share all those our day,
who tho surround fun/games, lost/alone

The message: "Unto you has been born this day, A
Saviour who is CHRIST THE LORD."

message that this Sav's birth was herald by star
A star ~~xxxxxx~~ when seen by men,

~~xxxxxx~~
"THEY REJOICED EXCEEDINGLY WITH GREAT JOY."

& stars trees/windows/homes/churches/everywhere,
should remind us JS XP

That we come 2 point,
"When ~~xxxxxx~~ the stars in the heavens I
see, Ever and always, I'll think of Thee."

That LORD JESUS may be the star shining in our heart
and the heavens of our lives.

"Songs In The Night: Song Of A Star!"

Text: Matthew 2:10,

"When they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly
with great joy."

(Illustrations flowers origin 2)

2 story legend show 1 thing

gifts of love
from childhood on look 4ward Xmas day.
day got things
perhaps still look 4ward Xmas
must learn day giving/sharing insted time take

realpurp Adv. 2 prepare 4 Xmas

4 birth take place & recog gift G.

G step in affairs men,
chose way men unders. / human/ baby/
almost all love babies

Many times reach this stage hear peop groan/moan
grumb/ Xmas 2 commerc
many time rt.

Summer Conn. K-Mart? winter stuff Xmas stuff
Sale peop/clerks rub ach feet, "I glad Xmas over"
All bus/bus/hurry/scurry/
run/rush/push/shove/cook/bake/clean

all this lose real mean

2 time yr special Me East/Xmas

Ea fill hart overflow

Not Bcause festivity/fun,

but speci signif 4 me personal

I recog day G did someth 4 me.

ME as miser as am G thot enuf me show luv 2 me

is any wonder lose site Xmas about when Js Xp

take 2nd place 2 Santa Cl, East. bun

S. Cl/E. Bun fine & fun,

but should teach child give/get Bcause G gave 2 us

Not only teach childr but selves also so

Bcome writ harts, & kno what all about

Peop say, "Put Xp Back in Xmas"

but how can if suppos Xpians join others not Xpians

& make Xmas nother day get drunk,

or wild immoral office party/plant party

Only way put Xp back Xmas,

B Xpian all actions/deeds/words/lives,

not just Sunday or when convenient

Scrip AM tell Wise men/babe/gifts etc

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
 Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
 Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.